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RAND ROYAL COMMISSION
ON COAL

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SUBMISSION

on behalf of

CAPE BRETON JOINT EXPENDITURE BOARD

TO

RAND ROYAL COMMISSION ON COAL,
at Sydney, Nova Scotia

PRESIDED over by Mr. Justice I. C. Rand.

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To: Mr. Justice I. C. Rand

Mr. Commissioner:

This brief is being presented on behalf of the Cape Breton Joint Expenditure Board. The Cape Breton Joint Expenditure Board is a Commission established by Nova Scotia Statute, in respect to the Municipal expenditure for the joint benefit of the Municipality and city and towns within the County of Cape Breton. On the Board are representatives from the City of Sydney, the Towns of Glace Bay, New Waterford, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, Louisbourg, and Dominion, and the Municipality of the County of Cape Breton.

It is realized by the Board, that submission to your Commission will be made by coal operators, Unions, and various municipalities. We do not wish to be repetitive, and we feel that recommendations as to the help needed by the coal industry will be made by groups who are probably much closer to the problem than we are. The Cape Breton Joint Expenditure Board wishes most emphatically to support the stand taken by District 26 of the United Mine Workers of America in regard to the use of residual oil and natural gas in Canada, and the importation of American coal into Canada. And we do endorse the recommendations that have been made and will be made by that Union on these matters.

Although the Joint Expenditure Board is not, perhaps, as close to the actual problems facing the coal Industry, as are other groups, we are most sensitive to the effects of any slowdown in the production of coal. And, above all, we are in very close touch with the people, the men, women and children, who are so seriously affected by a slackening in production.

This is the point that we wish to emphasize! That this Commission in its deliberations and in its recommendations, will not for one moment forget the social impact of the closing of any of our Cape Breton coal mines. That, regardless of economic pressures or the march of progress, or any other materialistic factors, the lives, the homes, the institutions of a large proportion of our population are being jeopardized, by the threat of deprivation of their traditional occupation!

Coal has been mined in Cape Breton Island from before the founding of Louisbourg and has been mined ever since, providing work, food and shelter for the people of Eastern Nova Scotia. Through the years a huge and stable industry has been built and maintained. Towns such as Glace Bay, Dominion, New Waterford and Sydney Mines are one industry towns, based and built upon coal. Areas such as Bras d'Or, Florence, New Victoria, Reserve Mines, Lingan, Donkin and Port Morien, are directly dependent upon the continuance of coal mining in their communities. One of the main factors in the establishment of the Sydney Steel Plant was the close existence of an abundant coal supply. All these communities have grown up with and because of the coal industry.

Today in Cape Breton County, roughly 135,000 people live and work, all of whom are to a greater or lesser degree dependent upon the production of coal. The real valuation of assessable property in the County of Cape Breton would approach 300 million dollars. Excluded from this figure is the value of the schools, the churches and public buildings. This value cannot be calculated in dollars and cents. The culture, the social life, the spiritual life of these communities are elements which were not created overnight. The Cape Breton Communities are not mushroom mining towns, born to bloom for a few

This is the point that we wish to emphasize. That

the Commission in its deliberations and in its recommendations, will not for one moment forget the social impact of the mining of any of our

Great Britain coal mines. That, regardless of economic pressures or the

need of progress, or any other economic factors, the lives, the

well-being, the satisfaction of a large proportion of our population are being

jeopardized, by the threat of deprivation of their traditional recreational

Coal has been mined in Cape Breton since before

the founding of Bonaventure and has been mined ever since, providing work,

food and shelter for the people of Eastern Nova Scotia. Through the

years a huge and stable industry has been built and maintained. Towns

that are now big, dominant, New Bedford and Sydney Mines are one

industry towns, based and built upon coal. Areas such as Bras d'Or,

St. John's, New Bedford, Reservoir Mines, L'Ange, Bonaventure and Port Mouton,

are directly dependent upon the continuance of coal-mining in their

communities. One of the main factors in the establishment of the

great coal field was the close existence of an abundant coal supply.

All these communities have grown up with and because of the coal industry.

Today in Cape Breton County, roughly 125,000 people

live and work, all of whom are in a greater or lesser degree dependent

upon the production of coal. The total valuation of assessable property

in the County of Cape Breton would approach 500 million dollars.

Excluded from this figure is the value of the schools, the churches and

other buildings. This value cannot be calculated in dollars and cents.

In outline, the social life, the spiritual life of these communities

is centered about the coal industry. The Cape Breton

communities are not scattered mining towns, born to bloom for a few

short years, then die as quickly as they were created.

The toil, the sweat, the heartbreak of hundreds of years, and the spirit and indomitable courage of thousands of remarkable people, have gone into the building of a city, towns, churches and schools, that represent a way of life. The people of Cape Breton Island have their roots here; roots that go back for generations. They will not willingly leave their homes. They will stay in Cape Breton if the coal mines are closed, and in all likelihood deplete the federal treasury, by way of first of all unemployment insurance, then by public relief of different kinds. There will be no income taxes paid because there will be no income. There will be few indirect taxes paid, because they will not be buying goods when their incomes are reduced. The drain on the federal treasury will be far greater than the few millions paid out to subsidize the coal industry.

The effect on a people's pride and purpose in living will also be disastrous. Keeping our people employed, helps them keep their self respect. The proud independent self respect of a people, who across Canada led the enlistment rates in two world wars; ready and willing to offer themselves on behalf of their country.

We do not think that Cape Bretoners are being too demanding, when they now ask their country for assistance to survive, until stability in the mines can be attained.

The effect on the rest of Canada should also be considered. Cape Breton County for years has provided a lucrative market for goods from Quebec and Ontario. Nearly all types of manufactured goods which are made in upper Canadian Provinces are sold here. The Canadian automobile industry (which itself is protected by the federal government) has a rich market in Cape Breton, which could

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disappear. Radios, television sets, refrigerators, and other home appliances are manufactured in other provinces, and sold in Cape Breton. Even fruit from southern Ontario and confectionery from Ontario and Quebec flood this market. It is entirely probable that the dislocation of the coal mining industry, will have a very harmful effect on industries far removed from Cape Breton.

The closing of collieries, reduces the tax income of the County in a multiplicity of ways. The direct assessment on the collieries disappears, business firms close up shop, homes are deserted. All of which means that income from property assessment for the municipalities is drastically reduced. Therefore the necessary services cannot be supplied. At the present time, we have ~~35,815~~ pupils attending school in the County of Cape Breton. There are 1089 classrooms including libraries and laboratories, and 21 auditoriums. Many more are required and some presently are being constructed. If the revenue from taxation is reduced, these classrooms may not be built. Over 100 churches which have been erected with diligence and reverence, rely upon the income of their adherents for maintenance and support.

Mr. Commissioner, we have attempted to point out to you that great social losses must necessarily be involved in the closing of any of our coal mines. With the whole industry in jeopardy, the prospective social losses will be much greater. It is the submission of the Cape Breton Joint Expenditure Board, that no effort on the part of the government to assure the continued operation of all Cape Breton coal mines should be spared. We hope that your commission will give careful consideration to the maintenance of our existing coal industry, and on behalf of the people whom we represent, we place our confidence

and our trust in your ability to find a solution that will ensure a continued, prosperous existence for the people of Cape Breton County.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

Cape Breton Joint Expenditure Board.
W. F. Beaton,
Chairman.

